I CLAIM:

1. In an image processing method that includes steganographically decoding an input two-dimensional image to extract a multi-bit code therein, the image comprising a two-dimensional array of pixels, an improvement comprising:

transforming the image into the spatial frequency domain;

pattern matching the transformed image so spatial frequencies obtained by said transforming step coincide with reference spatial frequencies, to thereby effect registration of the transformed image;

inverse-transforming the transformed image to yield a registered image;

identifying, in the registered image, a plurality of regions that encode a first control bit, said regions being distributed through the registered image in a regular array;

performing a statistical analysis over at least said plurality of regions to determine whether the first control bit has first or second values;

if said control bit has the first value, performing a first decoding process on the image to extract the code therefrom; and

if said control bit has the second value, performing a second decoding process on the image to extract the code therefrom, the second decoding process being different than the first.

add B1

add C3

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